Family Social Science and the World Context

Insights from Thailand

When Dr. Dan Detzner began his exploration of Southeast Asian elders living in Minnesota, he wasn't sure where it would take him. It turns out, however, that one place it has taken him is to Thailand. Detzner spent this past year on sabbatical during which he and his family spent three months there. It was an exciting trip both personally and professionally. Every day was a learning experience.

As a visiting professor at Chulalongkorn University (STOU), Dr. Detzner took part in many experiences that have enhanced his understanding of Hmong and Thai families. He worked with STOU faculty to develop a new gerontology curriculum at their university and presented seminars and public lectures in the School of Home Economics and the

Highland Thai Hmong Grandmother and Child

Extension Extends its Reach to West Indies

During a wet and warm July, just before hurricane season, Dr. Jean Bauer traveled to Trinidad and Tobago for a visit to the University of West Indies. Invited to assist with research, she worked with Lauren Burriss-Phillips, an Extension Specialist in farm and home management, and Dr. Carlisle Pemberton, Department Head of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management at the University of West Indies which is located in St. Augustine. Dr. Bauer helped the faculty to develop and field test a questionnaire to study the communication patterns of farm families.

In the East Caribbean, like many developing countries, many women are the primary farmers. Most of the studies, however, use accounts from the male in the farm household who tells researchers

Bauer continued page 2

Grotevant continued page 3
College of Education. At the National University of Singapore, he presented a lecture on aging families and on his life history interviews with Southeast Asian refugees in Minnesota. And, at the Hill Tribe Research Center in Chiang Mai, Thailand, he also presented a lecture about Hmong refugees in the United States.

The highlight of his research trip was a three week venture into Hmong villages located in mountainous areas of northern Thailand. During this part of the trip, Dr. Dettner participated in interview and observational research with a group of Thai and Hmong scholars and research assistants. The project was developed at the STOU to study the acceptance and integration of agricultural, home environment, educational, and public health development efforts. These issues were being explored in relation to the teenage, mature adult, and elder generations of these Hmong village families.

This project took him into remote villages where living conditions were often quite poor. Dr. Dettner interviewed the oldest man and woman in each of the three villages and found out more about their life histories, and the changes, as well as continuities, they have experienced. Dr. Dettner hopes to continue his research relationship with the faculty at STOU and at the Hill Tribe Research Center. He is currently collaborating on and writing a number of articles about his research. His chapter “Life Histories: Conflict in Southeast Asian Refugee Families” is featured in a recent Sage publication Qualitative Methods for Family Research (Gilgun, Daly, and Handel, 1992).

Bauer continued from page 1

about the farm situation. The new study uses a questionnaire which was developed so that both the farmer, whether male or female, and their spouse or partner could be interviewed. With their current plan of research, the investigators hope to contribute to the knowledge about farming practices, decision-making processes, and the communication patterns of the families.

Jean has been to Trinidad and the surrounding region three times in the last four years. In 1988, she worked with Dr. Pemberton and others to set up an Extension program to help farm families keep better farm and home financial records. A year later, Dr. Marlene Stamm, Dr. Bauer and others taught a week-long program at the University of West Indies. In the seminar they assisted the frontline Extension Agents to understand the systems approach to helping families.

“It was exciting to be a part of a project that will be used to better understand the families they work with, as well as other families. This is one of the first studies they have done that will be used to build their Extension education programs,” says Dr. Bauer. “I realized the urgency of helping these families to increase their farm income. My trip expenses were as much as the farm families I interviewed make in an entire year from their farming operation. It is no wonder that they need off-farm income to survive.”

In Trinidad, the economy has slowed because of oil prices, and is being influenced by the European Common Market decisions. So, professionals are trying to help the farm families be more self-sufficient and, at the same time, have commodities that support the quality of life on the islands. In the interviews, Dr. Bauer discovered that the families all had hope for the future despite their limited income. “It will be interesting to study the use of resources in these families,” she said. “I am sure their attitude [of optimism] and creativity increases their available resources.”

In addition to her research work, Jean met with several female graduate students in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management. She explained, “I have been requested to be on the graduate faculty of the University to assist as an outside reviewer for dissertations. I agreed to work only with those who are studying families, household consumption, or topics that are supportive of the economic well-being of families.”

The trip was personally rewarding for Dr. Bauer. “I have a better understanding of families. I also was able to observe how personal beliefs esp. religious and spiritual beliefs influence the farming operations. I was told that these beliefs influenced their spending patterns...so, I was able to predict some of the answers to the questions,” she said pointing out that in the United States we tend not to emphasize those issues in our family studies. “This means that I have learned about the families in their program over the years, but in reality I still have very little understanding of the families.” Dr. Bauer will continue her connections with the University of West Indies as the research progresses, and will continue to grow as she learns about families in the Caribbean area.
A View From Taiwan

Sheau-Er Chen teaches at National Taiwan Normal University and is a Ph.D. student in Family Social Science who is trying to complete her degree traveling back and forth from Taipei to St. Paul. Since beginning in FSoS in 1987, she has seen many changes in her home University’s orientation toward family studies. “The students seemed very interested this past year. They kept coming to me for more lectures about families; they really wanted to learn more,” said Chen. Using American texts as reference, her class uses translated versions of U.S. family texts and also reads Chinese authors. The family courses are open to students in other departments as well and have become very popular.

When Sheau-Er first came to the U.S. she felt that it would be possible to apply American family theory to Taiwanese and Chinese families, so long as she was aware of how theory is embedded in culture. Her views have changed over time as she has taken what she’s learning back to Taiwan. “As you get deeper into theory, some parts don’t fit Taiwanese culture. In research, the relevant variables change. You must apply the theories carefully. ... And, some topics are not relevant in my culture,” she explained. For instance, homosexuality isn’t something discussed, but other topics like parent-child relationships and communication are important. “Basic ideas about relationships and healthy ways of relating to one another are important to teach [no matter where you are],” she said.

Her University is more open to these courses for a variety of reasons, one being overall social change in Taiwan and China. “There is more media, news papers, more influence from the West, and there are more problems [in families],” she said. Some Chinese families still have grandparents who support their children by taking care of grandchildren. At the same time, however, the economy and work world is changing from agriculture to industry and urbanization, and most women now work outside their homes.

In the past three to four years, these changes have spurred more social problems. The people and the government have become more sensitive to the needs of families. “There are more private foundations that have developed recently to serve people and families, some are from the Christian church. They are trying to work on things like teenage pregnancy, unwed mothers, and abuse,” Chen said. The government has recently established a Family Service Center in most cities, and new policies on adoption have come into affect. These programs are so new, she says, they are still looking for direction which is a major reason that more international exchange is happening. They are inviting people from the U.S. to visit and advise them, and more students are training in the U.S., too. Change in the political, as well as the social, environment has contributed to this more open exchange.

On a personal level, Sheau-Er Chen says that coming from Taiwan to study and then going back and forth has been difficult. Privacy is not the same concept in Taiwan as in the U.S., neither is individualism. “Here I learned to ask many questions, and when I went back some people didn’t like that,” she said. “The way people show they care for other people is different too. You are supposed to sacrifice for others. ... And, communication is different. In Taiwan it is done much more indirectly. Sometimes that is good, but not always.”

Sheau-Er also says she experienced reverse culture shock when she left the U.S. last year and returned to Taiwan to teach. “Taiwan is much smaller. The environmental pollution, noise, air, is worse. There are many people, cars, houses, motorcycles in the cities and I had learned to enjoy the quiet green environment [of the St. Paul Campus].”

She feels her work will continue to be challenging. She teaches up to six courses and is also responsible for their evening extension program. “It has been difficult, hard at times, but it has equipped me better to understand people, and be supportive. My education has been very valuable to me.” Sheau-Er Chen hopes to return again next summer so she can continue to work on her dissertation.

Grotevant continued from page 1

It is particularly encouraging to receive these reports in the midst of the budget cuts that face higher education in this country. They illustrate our determination to provide the best experiences in family science research, teaching, and outreach possible. We continue to rethink our curriculum at all levels in order to be inclusive of the experiences of all families. In this issue, you will see articles featuring perspectives on international research and outreach and on families with members who have disabilities. The entire faculty has also committed itself to a year-long process of multicultural curriculum revision, working with Professor Rose Brewer, an adjunct faculty member in our department and Chair of the university’s Afro-American and African Studies Department.

This fall also witnessed the grand opening of the new undergraduate advising center, which will connect undergraduates more readily with faculty and advisors in the department. Our first annual Undergraduate Day was a smashing success! It has been particularly gratifying to see many of our undergrads gain research experience with faculty in order to prepare themselves for graduate school. The spring issue of Interactions will highlight research programs and technological change in the department.

We very much appreciate the financial contributions we have received from alumni and friends of the department in order to continue building excellence in our programs. We have special funds for student support, research support, and other departmental needs. I hope you will once again consider supporting our department, which you may do by using the envelope enclosed with this newsletter. With your partnership, we can continue to go forward serving families through education, research, and outreach. As always, I welcome the opportunity to hear from any of our readers and encourage you to write or call.

Yours sincerely,

Hal Grotevant
Disability and The Family

Gill Presents Changing Perspective

Dr. Carol Gill, President and Director of Psychological Research at the Chicago Institute of Disability Research, visited the department last spring. Her presentation, "A Bicultural/Interactional Model for Understanding Disability in the Family" brought insightful commentary to the complex topic. While she acknowledged that the "I'd rather be dead than disabled" mentality still exists, the Disability Pride Movement has helped to give her, and others, a new perspective on disability. Many of the 43 million Americans who are disabled, said Gill, are hungry for a positive, empowering side to disability; what she referred to as "disability cool."

Dr. Gill, who herself uses a wheelchair, does research and clinical work with disabled people. Gill says, "Their issues often center on questions of identity and lack of self-esteem. ... the origin of the deepest pain often involves feeling split into acceptable and unacceptable parts" by their families and people closest to them. She says all kinds of families do this "splitting," not only ones who are obviously "abusive." Damage can be done in subtle ways even by the most well-meaning, caring families. Families often view a disabled member as abnormal and may attempt many things to make the disability "go away," rather than accept the disability as an integral part of their family member's identity. Comments such as "I never think if him as disabled," or "She can overcome her handicap if she only works hard," reflect this unwillingness to accept the disability as inseparable from the whole person.

Dr. Gill contrasts the medical model of disability which views disability as an abnormality, as negative, and as residing in the individual, with what she calls the "Interactional Model." In this model, disability is a difference which is neutral not an inferiority. "Disability derives from the interaction between the individual and the society," says Gill. This is the case in particular with disabilities that are public, ones that others notice, whether or not they result in any serious physical, mental, or sensory impairment.

In her model, the solution for disability related problems is a change in the interaction between the individual and society. The agent of change can be the individual, advocates, or anyone who affects this relationship between the disabled person and society. The medical model, on the other hand, looks at "cure" or "normalization" of the disabled individual as the remedy; the professional, usually medical professional, becomes the agent of remedy.

The crux of Gill's model is that it defines "problem" and the "solution" very differently from the medical model. It acknowledges that disabled people as a group have a culture and history of their own in that their disabilities affect their life choices and world view. Experiencing life as a disabled person often feels like straddling the fence between two worlds: the disabled and the able-bodied. Being looked upon as disabled ones whole life can be isolating if there is no one around that shares this culture with you. Gill says it is not unlike a child of color who is adopted into a white-European family. She stressed the importance of parents nurturing children who are disabled in a community of other disabled people. She believes that it is very important psychologically for a disabled person to accept their disability as part of themselves, to validate that part of their total identity.

"We are not flawed, or inferior. There is not shame in being unable to do some things; or in being able to do them differently. But, an ablest, physicalist society pronounces that my disability is a flaw," explained Gill. It is most essential that the family environment be one where there is affirmation for being different and for being whole, rather than devaluation for not being the same. "The disability life style," said Gill, "has enriching qualities and may not be a tragedy." Dr. Carol Gill is a researcher and advocate who knows of what she speaks, and hopes that her work will influence necessary changes.

Disability Pride: A Student's Story

Gene Chelberg has been working hard lately, but that really isn't new for him. Chelberg, who has been blind since age 13, has worked hard for years to learn to live with pride about his disability. "It's funny you ask me about my background," he laughed during our interview. "My grandmother just sent me a whole envelope of the history of my life, all these articles about 'super blind boy Gene.' I was resilient at 13 and after time in the hospital, and learning some blind skills, I just went back on the treadmill. I also had a very supportive mom. But, a 13 year old doesn't have the emotional tools to deal with the implications of becoming blind," says Chelberg. "It's like a spiral staircase of grief and loss. You learn as you go, and the next time you land back in that place you have a little more knowledge." His philosophy must be working, because Chelberg won four University awards last spring for his work and leadership: The College of Human Ecology Alumni Society Outstanding Student Award, the Judge Hughes Humanitarian Award, the Donald Zander Leadership Award, and the President's Leadership Award. And, he has helped to establish the University of Minnesota's Disabled Student Cultural Center which opened in October, believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

The group who worked to establish the center were riding in part, says Chelberg, on the recent Americans with Disabilities Act. The University
community was also supporting efforts toward inclusion and diversity. In the spring of 1991 Mary Litzheim, a student who was working toward her Master’s degree, decided to study experiences of students with disabilities. Chelberg signed on as a research assistant. They wanted to find out many things, one of which was how the University could better support “the disability community.” The answer came in the form of a question: “What community?” It became clear in his mind, says Chelberg, that the University needed to help build that community, to establish a place which would help them feel more a part of the University. The center was conceptualized as such a place. A place where they could end isolation and begin the construction of a disability community. For the next year and a half after that, the center became one of Gene Chelberg’s dreams.

That summer he went to a summer workshop called “Blind Studies 101: Explorations of Culture.” “For me, it was the first time I really felt proud about being blind. I came away with a huge high. I didn’t want to leave and come back.” But, he did return, and after meeting with Sue Kroeger in Office for Students with Disabilities, they decided to apply for student funding to establish the center. It was no easy ride. At one point during the process Gene left for five weeks to train with his seeing eye dog. He says he was afraid that the center was only his dream, and that if he left it wouldn’t happen. But when he returned for their first meeting, the room was full of people who wanted the center to happen. “Then I knew this was other’s reality, not just my dream. ... The challenge now is to keep it going, and to do what we said we’d do.”

The Center plans to have a speakers bureau, peer support group, a mentor program, and to sponsor events and programs like the ones held during National Disability Awareness Week when the center opened. “The center is our heart,” says Chelberg. “People drop in; they are always coming by.” They have four officers who have many plans and a great deal of enthusiasm. The main goal is to promote the development of disability community culture and pride. They want to get away from a deficit model of disability.

The current mainstreaming sometimes forgets that a disabled student can be more isolated by being cut off from others who are more like them and who better understand their world view. “I think Carol Gill has put her finger on it for me. We’re like cultural foster children in an able-bodied world where our disability gets separated from who we are as people,” said Chelberg. He agrees that the new thinking on these issues has many implications for families and for family professionals. It will take a lot of adjustment for schools who are just now getting comfortable with mainstreaming. As for the University, the Disabled Student Cultural Center will provide an avenue for the creation of a community that may help disabled college students feel more connected and more supported. It seems that it may provide a kind of family for many people.

Alumni Profile

Dr. Linda Budd was one of four persons to receive the 1992 Distinguished Teaching Award from the University of Minnesota’s Continuing Education and Extension Program. At the CEE Honors and Awards Ceremony held in October, Dr. Budd was presented with a commemorative plaque and a $1000 stipend. She was selected on the basis of her accomplishments in teaching CEE courses such as Family Social Science 5025: Parenting, a regularly offered and popular course, which Linda will have taught for 30 quarters after next Winter’s offering.

Her nomination dossier included letters of support from Family Social Science faculty and students who have worked and studied with her. She has been considered an expert in the area of parenting for over 15 years, and is the author of Living with the Active Alert Child (1990, Prentice-Hall). She consistently receives enthusiastic and outstanding comments from her students. In a field where many spend time pondering the essential question of how to bridge theory, research and practice, Dr. Budd has made her mark as she skillfully translates research and theory into applicable ideas for practitioners and students.

Linda Budd received her Ph.D. in Family Social Science in 1976. Her dissertation was entitled Problems, Disclosure, and Commitment of Cohabiting and Married Couples. In the decade after earning her doctorate, Linda practiced at Judson Family Center in Minneapolis where she has served on the Board of Directors. Now, as Adjunct Assistant Professor and teaching for CEE, she is also a licensed consulting

Budd continued page 7
New Graduate Students Enter

A new cohort of graduate students entered Family Social Science this fall and brings together a diverse group of people to study families. Their arrival was celebrated at the annual welcome luncheon in September.

Manijeh Danespour, is here from the University of Utah where she received a BA in child and family development, and an MS in Family Ecology. Originally from Tehran, Iran, she plans to focus on marital and family therapy.

Dean Gorall, is originally from Green Bay, Wisconsin where he received a BA from UW-Green Bay in psychology. At Oklahoma State University he received an MS in Family Relations with an MFT specialization. He would eventually like to train therapists.

Michelle Johnson was born in Sauk Center, Minnesota. She has a BA in English and African American Studies from the University of Minnesota. She also worked on a research project in FSOS before deciding to apply to this department. She wants to pursue teaching and research in the areas of family and community development, race relations, and lived experience of ethnic group members.

Beth Maddock considers St. Paul her home, though she was born in Chicago. She studied at the University of Michigan and the University of Wisconsin-Madison and has a BS in psychology. She is interested in teaching, research, and work in family service agencies.

Joyce Mesner has six years of experience working as a parish pastor. She’s lived in Minnesota for the past five years. She has a BA in English from the U of Illinois, a M.Div., and is a Ph.D. candidate in Old Testament interpretation from Northwestern University. She plans to receive MFT training, and eventually to practice while teaching at a college or seminary.

Ramona Oswald moved to Minnesota from Philadelphia nine years ago to attend Macalester College in St. Paul, from which she received a BA in fine art and philosophy. She has worked in human service agencies on issues of domestic violence and parenting. She is particularly interested in developing family life education materials for families with a lesbian or gay member.

Vicky Tam is originally from Hong Kong. She has a BA in psychology and statistics, an MSW, and an MA in Home Economics Education. She has studied at both the University of Hong Kong and at the University of Minnesota. She plans to pursue a career in Hong Kong after completing her Ph.D.

Congratulations to those who completed Ph.D. dissertations:

Celvia Dixon, Predictors of Life Satisfaction for Elderly African-Americans. Marlene Stum was her advisor; David H. Olson was her co-advisor.

Carol Hoffman, Caregiving Among Older Couples: Context, Roles, and Adjustment. M. Janice Hogan was her advisor and Shirley Zimmerman was her co-advisor.

Eun Min Hyun, Factors in Determining Resource Adequacy. Perception for Rural Couples. Her advisor was Jean Bauer.

Joseph Niesen, Family History, High Risk Behaviors, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection Status in Adult Gay Men with Chemical Dependency Problems. Richard Needle was his advisor.

Patricia Spoontgen, Goal Setting in Family Therapy with Intrafamilial Sexual Abuse Families. James Maddock was her advisor.

Noy Vechhunyongratana, Life Satisfaction of Middle Generation Among husband and Wives. Sharon Danes and Daniel Detzner were her advisors.

The following students completed their M.A. Theses:


Deborah Beth Smith, Factors Influencing the Labor Force Participation and Labor Force Attachment Decisions of Minnesota Farm Women. Sharon Danes was her advisor.
Faculty News

Bill Doherty was recently sent by the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists to Milan, Italy to conduct a video taped interview of Mara Selvini-Palazzoli, MD, a prominent Italian psychiatrist and family therapist who had been one of the leaders in family therapy.

Hal Grotevant has been named to the Advisory Board of the Complete Scholar Program, an outreach arm of the Continuing Education and Extension program at the University of Minnesota.

Jan Hogan who had been serving as the College of Human Ecology Associate Dean, will be returning to the department after her year sabbatical. She was recently honored at the CHE Alumni Society's annual meeting as Outstanding Faculty Member in the college.

Richard Needle has resigned from his position in the department to take a position as Branch Chief of the Community Research Branch at the National Institute of Drug Abuse in Washington D.C. Dr. Needle had been on the department's faculty since 1983.

David Olson was recently featured on CNN “Sonja Live” and CBS “Morning Show.” AAMFT did a press release about his new research using the PREPARE and ENRICH instruments, which can predict success of a marriage with 80% accuracy. Dr. Olson was also appointed to serve on the Working Group for Implementing the National Commission on Children’s Report on Building a Commitment to Strong Families.

Marlene Stum is working with other extension faculty to empower community leaders in Le Sueur County, Minnesota to address priority issues facing families with youth via a planned, proactive research project that included gathering data, analyzing and presenting it, and working toward solutions via community forums.

Shirley L. Zimmerman has a new monograph out as part of the Sage Source Books for the Human Services Series. Family Policies and Family Well-Being: The Role of Political Culture (Newbury Park, CA: Sage) was published in 1992 and expands on her research on family policy.

Grants

All-University Council on Aging Grants

Pauline G. Boss and Dan Detzner both received $3000.00 seed grants from the Council to help support their research on aging related issues. Dr. Boss plans to continue her work on families of Alzheimer's patients with her project “Caregiver Well-Being in Minority Populations of Dementia Patients.” Dr. Detzner will use his grant to extend his work Southeast Asian elders. This project will be “A Family Typology of Southeast Asian Elderly Refugees.”

Department Grants on Diversity

The department has received a $3000.00 grant from the Bush Faculty Development Program to work toward the development of a “Family Economics and Policy collateral” at the undergraduate level. The grant will be matched by the department, and will be used to revise courses to be more inclusive of the diversity of families in the United States.

In addition, the entire faculty is working on a year-long project dealing with multicultural curriculum reform under the guidance of Dr. Rose Brewer of Afro-American and African Studies. The project is funded through a Community-Building Grant from the Office of Student Affairs.

Mac Arthur Foundation Grant

Dr. Harold Grotevant has also received a $18,280.00 grant from the Mac Arthur Foundation for a new research venture called the “Family Story Collaborative Project.”

St. Paul Foundation Grant

In September, Dr. Jim Maddock received a grant of $16,000.00 from the St. Paul Foundation in St. Paul, Minnesota to continue his research evaluating the impact on families of treatment for child sexual abuse.
Linda Burton Featured During Winter

Dr. Linda Burton will be featured as the College of Human Ecology’s Biester-Young Lecturer this upcoming February 25. She is Associate Professor in the College of Health and Human Development at Penn State University. Her research efforts center on the effects of teenage pregnancy and childbearing on multigenerational family relationships. In particular she has examined the role transition to grandmothership in urban black families. Her February visit will feature a full-day public workshop planned by the Family Social Science Department with sponsorship from others at the University. Dr. Burton’s visit is also connected to the University’s goal “to expand curriculum and approaches to teaching... in support of multicultural educational opportunities and understanding,” as written by President Hasselmo. For further information, please contact the Family Social Science Department office at 625-1900.

Building a Solid Major

The First Annual Undergraduate Day for the department was held in October highlighted by a slide presentation given by Dr. Daniel Detzner on “Thai, Hmong, and American Families: Research in Cross Cultural Context.” The event was sponsored by the FSoS Undergraduate Advising Center which has newly relocated and expanded to be closer to the department’s main office. Staffed by graduate students Michelle Johnson and Vicky Tam, under the supervision of Dr. William Goodman, the center’s goal is to provide more comprehensive advising for the department’s undergraduate majors. In addition, they wish to provide an atmosphere of community support for students’ educational, personal, and professional development while working toward their degrees. The event was well attended by undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and graduate students. The undergraduates especially expressed their delight at having such an event to help them stay connected with one another and to help them meet faculty in a more relaxed environment. The Undergraduate Day will be repeated at least yearly. It is all part of continuing work to build a solid base for students in the Family Social Science undergraduate major.